



The Poly Rambler

Members' Newsletter of the Polytechnic Rambling Club

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Chairman's Message

The Newsletter has a new editor. Gillian agreed to do this job on a short term basis at the end of 2011, so many thanks to her for actually completing three full years. Our thanks to Kim Chowns for taking over. He will welcome contributions from you, the membership. 2014 ended on a sad note for the Club with the funerals of former President Bert Pitts and former Chairman Peter Gould.

Material for this edition collated by the committee.
Production by Kim Chowns
Printing arrangements by Dominique Le Marchand.

Both of them contributed much of their spare time to the club and to walking matters generally. I was pleased to see that the Club was well represented at both funerals and this was noted and welcomed by their families. In November, Mollie Smith, our General Secretary in the 60's and 70's also passed away. We also heard of the death earlier in the year of David Rackham, a regular walker in the 90's. An appreciation of Bert is on page 6 and Mollie on page 8 and Peter's will appear in the next issue. On March 14th we will be holding our AGM, further details of which are in the Club's programme. We hope that as many of you as possible will attend. This is your chance to vote for the officers and committee members and generally hold them to account. Apart from the formal business and opportunity for members to raise concerns, the AGM has developed into an enjoyable social event. There will be vacancies to be filled on the committee and we would welcome anyone with new ideas for walks, activities and recruitment. Papers, including nominations for committee members will be issued shortly.

I'm pleased to say that attendance on walks is up compared with 2013. We now have additional shorter walks on days where the programmed walk is longer. These are proving very popular so thanks to those of you who arrange them.

Last year brought a slight decline in membership. Word of mouth seems to be the most effective way of getting new recruits so please do continue to spread the word amongst friends and colleagues.

Here's to a good year's rambling in 2015 - I look forward to seeing you on a walk soon.

Mike Coyle

The Polytechnic Rambling Club

(in association with the
University of Westminster)
Founded 1885

Affiliated to the Ramblers'
Association (Inner London Area)
Affiliated to HF Holidays

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

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Vice Presidents

Gerald Kremenstein
Margaret Lanham
Rosemary MacLoughlin
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Mike Coyle

General Secretary

Gillian Swan

Treasurer

Daniel Duffy

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Pam Beach
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Autumn weekend in Chepstow

Stuart and I first visited Chepstow in summer 2013 when we stopped there for lunch en-route to Swansea to recce the Gower peninsula weekend. Within minutes of arriving we had decided it would be a good base for another Club weekend, being the starting point for a number of long distance paths. So in October a group of 15 Polyramblers travelled down from Paddington, changing at Newport for the local service to Chepstow. I had booked the party into three B&B's of which two were in the centre of town, but the third was a mile outside towards Chepstow racecourse, which was a bit of a struggle carrying luggage, as it was an uphill walk all the way!

Chepstow Castle



We spent a couple of hours on Friday afternoon on a town walk, taking in the autumn sunshine, learning some of the history of the town and getting acquainted with the layout.

The English/Welsh border ran down the middle of the river Wye, so we stood on the bridge with a foot in each country. We stopped for a drink at the Boat Inn on the banks of the river. On returning to the town we came across Danny who had arrived on a later train and was already firmly ensconced in the Three Tuns pub, where we enjoyed a pleasant meal later that evening.

Continued on next page

Autumn weekend in Chepstow (continued)

The forecast for Saturday morning was not promising and we met by the Castle in full waterproofs with steady rain. Danny had planned for his group to walk to Tintern Abbey, but announced that they would travel by bus instead and walk back. The 'serious' walkers, led by Stuart, set out along the Wye Valley walk to Tintern. This proved quite hard work, as the path was uneven and slippery in the wet conditions, but we were rewarded when the sun came out as we reached Tintern and we stopped for lunch at the impressive ruined Abbey. We had expected to see Danny's group, but there was no sign of them. The more sceptical members of the party wondered if his group would actually do any walking. This led to a bet between Stuart and Harriet (Stuart betting that they wouldn't).



View of Tintern Abbey from Offa's Dyke

The rest of the walk took us a little further up river to cross the Wye at Brockweir where we stopped for a drink before starting the ascent to pick up the Offa's Dyke path heading south. This was easier walking underfoot than the morning, but some of the climbs were rather challenging, especially at the end of the day. We arrived back in Chepstow around 6pm, tired but satisfied. For the record, the total length was 12.9 miles, plus a bit more for those at the Racecourse Guest House! We later discovered that Danny's group had done some walking, but missed a bus and ended up having to walk down 365 steps, after which they hired a taxi back to Chepstow! This news meant that Stuart had lost his bet with Harriet and he

grudgingly bought her a drink the next day. Sunday morning, the same group, minus Dominique who had hurt her foot the day before, convened for a walk along the Gloucestershire Way, the third long distance path starting from Chepstow, towards Lydney in the Forest of Dean.

In spite of a few route-finding problems which



meant having to adapt the walk as we went along to fit in with the time available, this turned out to be a good day's hike with great views of the river Severn (10.5 miles for the record). We stopped for a welcome drink at Aylburton a mile or so from the end, and finished at Lydney station where we met Danny's group who had enjoyed a trip on the Dean Forest Railway. We had no time to visit Lydney, but learnt from Danny's group that it was not worth visiting.

Monday morning was wet and we were surprised to see the whole group waiting for the bus down to Beachley, a village at the confluence of the Wye and Severn rivers and close to the Severn Bridge. The anticipated views of the Bridge failed to materialise in the rain and mist and things looked so bleak that a few members of the group jumped straight back on the bus as it headed back to town. The rest of us carried on, first on the road and then on the banks of the Severn Estuary, by which time the rain had cleared. With some difficulty we found the official start of the Offa's Dyke path. This took us back by a scenic route to Chepstow in time for a leisurely lunch before catching the London-bound train.

Gillian

How to see the Polytechnic Rambling Club Facebook page without fear!

The club now has a Facebook page (see below). On it, you can see information about the club, details of the walks and photos of some of the walks and weekends.

For those familiar with Facebook, you will know what to do. Others can see the Facebook page without danger of becoming entangled within Facebook. Here is how you do it:

- Click on or copy the following address of the Polytechnic Rambling Club Facebook page in your search engine: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Polytechnic-Rambling-Club/676342259111303?ref=hl> or <http://tinyurl.com/qclyyfq> (reduced by using www.tinyurl.com) and you will be able to see the club's page.
- Ignore the message about 'sign up' or 'log in'.
- You are now able to browse the Facebook page and look at photos. You can only add comments, like a page or share a page if you are registered with Facebook.
- Easy!

To keep the page alive and interesting, those who are registered with Facebook could add comments or photos about a walk. If you are not registered with Facebook, feel free to email me a paragraph about a walk and photos and I will add them to the club page. My email address is: tonybyrnes@compuserve.com

And please tell friends and colleagues about the club and its Facebook page. We need more 'Likes'!

Many thanks

Dominique



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Facebook page for the Polytechnic Rambling Club. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Polytechnic-Rambling-Club/676342259111303?ref=hl>. The Facebook page header includes the club's name and a navigation menu with options for Timeline, About, Events, Photos, and More. The main content area features a cover photo of a green field with a stone wall, a profile picture of a purple and white logo, and a post from January 3rd about a linear walk from Holland Park to Horseguards. The post includes the date and time (3 January at 12:00 in UTC) and the location (Holland Park Station). The page also shows 18 likes and a 'Log in' button.

Icknield Way Long Distance Path – our next challenge

Now that the Club has completed the Ridgeway National Trail (Ivinghoe Beacon to Avebury), and the Wessex Ridgeway (Marlborough/ Avebury to Lyme Regis) the next step is to look to the eastern part of the Greater Ridgeway which links Lyme Regis with Hunstanton in Norfolk.

First we will tackle the Icknield Way, an ancient route based on prehistoric pathways, said to be the oldest road in Britain. It starts at Ivinghoe Beacon and runs through Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, ending in Suffolk at Knettishall Heath, near Thetford (110 miles in total).

The first few stages can be completed as day walks and the first of these will be on 16 May from Tring to Dunstable (see programme for details). I am sure it will be a rewarding challenge.

When we reach Suffolk we can (if we have any energy left!) link up with the Peddar's Way which runs north through Norfolk to Hunstanton on the coast.

Hope to see you on the 16 May for stage one.

Gillian

AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN NORTH WALES

FRIDAY 28TH AUGUST TO TUESDAY
1ST SEPTEMBER

This year we are making a return visit to Wales, staying in student accommodation at the University of Bangor in North Wales. We will be based in the city of Bangor itself within easy access to the train station and shops, and the coast with Anglesey just across the Menai Strait and the mountains of Snowdonia close at hand. We should be spoilt for choice for walking and sightseeing opportunities.

Accommodation comprises of single ensuite rooms grouped into flats with shared kitchen facilities. No crockery, cutlery, pots or pans are provided. So bring everything you need or purchase on arrival.

Accommodation can be booked on a room only or bed and breakfast basis (full self-service breakfast in campus café/ bar). Or Morrison's café is 5 minutes away for ad hoc breakfasts!

Bangor is 3½ hours by train from London Euston, changing at Chester. Cost for four nights room only £124; bed and breakfast £148.

If you would like to come please contact the organiser Gillian Swan gillian.swan@dsl.pipex.com and pay a £50 non-refundable deposit by bank transfer to the Club's account (number 29935940, sort code 05-02-00) or send a cheque made out to the Club to Danny Duffy, 50 Dewhurst Road, London W14 0ES.

Gillian



Bert Pitts 1920 - 2014

Bert was born in Bethnal Green where his father was a policeman. His first job was with the London Electricity Board where he worked in accounts and later became a supervisor. His brother-in-law died during the war and Bert became a support to his sister in bringing up her children.

Bert joined the Polytechnic Rambling Club in the 1940s and held various offices including social secretary, rambling secretary and treasurer. He was also involved in joining the Men's and the Ladies' clubs together into one club in the 1960s. After the amalgamation, Bert became chairman. Then in the 1980s he became president, an office which he held for 27 years until he stepped down in 2011.

In retirement he also joined the old members association where he became treasurer. Bert was a Free Mason, a keen photographer and a tennis player.

Older members remember how Bert organised yearly holidays, one of the favourite places to go to was Little Canada on the Isle of Wight. The Polyramblers was never just a rambling club though. It has always had a range of social events as well. Friday nights were social nights and ramblers often started in the Lido restaurant around the corner from the institute before congregating in the reading room for dancing, playing games or general fun! Bert was a keen participant in all this, including fancy dress parties and appearing on stage with the Ramblers Amateur Troupers! After Christmas it was time for the pantomime and Bert used to bring his nephew along to have a good time, including tea with everybody afterwards.

Bert was considered to be a "ladies' man", enjoying dancing and playing tennis "with the girls"! However, he never married. Bert was known as a kind man who always cared about others. He is remembered for all his involvement and dedication to the club which he helped to shape into what it is today.

Margaret Lanham

Alan Hynard

Photo by Geoffrey Waters

August Bank Holiday Weekend in Yorkshire 2014

The idea for this trip was first mooted in 2013 when Harrogate was the provisional venue. However accommodation options there for a large party were limited, so Leeds was chosen as a base instead. We stayed at the university halls of residence, once a brewery, in the north of the city at Headingley. The public transport network in the area is very comprehensive, so it was not necessary to reach the planned walks by private means. In addition, there was a reasonable selection of pubs and restaurants in the vicinity and most importantly a Morrison's supermarket for breakfast supplies!

There were twenty eight people in the party and the majority were able to do the first walk on the Friday evening. We strolled along a pleasant stretch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal for about three miles right into the city centre. There we split up into various groups to eat and drink at various hostelrys before returning to the accommodation by bus.

The next day the whole group headed for Harewood House, the home belonging to the Lascelles family. The faster walkers immediately headed off round the grounds of the stately home and then joined the Leeds Country Way and Ebor Way footpaths for the remainder of the day's walking. The slower walkers persuaded their leader to stop for coffee after about five minutes, a pattern that was to be followed for the rest of the trip! They then rambled around the grounds in a mixture of sunshine and showers before some visited the house and the remainder went to the local pub!

On the Sunday, our destination was Ilkley Moor and the weather throughout the day was excellent. The faster walkers started with a canal walk to the World Heritage village of Saltaire before heading north onto the moor with stupendous views in all directions. They then headed down into the attractive market town of Ilkley. The slower walkers did a circuit of the moor from here and equally enjoyed the pleasures of the area.

The weather forecast for the Monday was not too good, but this didn't deter the whole party from travelling by train to Knaresborough, one of Yorkshire's prettiest places. After a walk around the town with its ruined castle, fine railway viaduct and obligatory stop for coffee, the two groups headed for the gorge of the River Nidd via the Beryl Burton Cycleway, named after the famous woman cyclist of the 1950s. Upon reaching the Nidd Viaduct, the faster walkers took the easier option of continuing alongside the river until they reached Harrogate. On the other hand, the slower walkers were made of sterner stuff and scaled the precipitous embankment by various means to reach the top of the viaduct. After a few choice words were directed at the leader, the group joined the Nidderdale Greenway and its route into the centre of the spa town!

Our last day dawned bright and sunny and we spent the morning wandering around the fine ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, close to the accommodation. After some refreshment, we picked up our luggage and returned to Leeds Station for our train home. All in all, an enjoyable trip for one and all!

Danny Duffy



View from Ilkley Moor



Mollie Smith

1936 – 2014

Mollie joined the Polyramblers in the 60's at the invitation of Dorothy Bodimead with whom she worked. Mollie commuted from Southend on Sea to the City and regularly attended the Friday night club meetings in the panelled reading room of the Polytechnic in Regent Street. She joined the committee and eventually became general secretary and enjoyed many of the rambles, rambling weekends and club holidays.

After marrying in 1973 Mollie became less active in the club, but was always interested in the programme of events and came to every AGM and also to the river cruise to celebrate the Club's 125th anniversary.

She was a keen traveller and in her 20's lived in New Zealand for two years. Subsequent travels included a world cruise and in the spring of 2014 cruised in the Mediterranean. Sadly she passed away later in the year following a short illness.

Mollie was a kind and generous person and will be sadly missed by her husband and all those who knew her.

Mary Stevens

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